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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to provide 237 elementary school students with strategies to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. The professional staff included 12 full-time teachers and 8 itinerant teachers who traveled to schools within the district. Workshops in conflict resolution strategies were presented for teachers to model and teach in the regular classroom. Peer mediation teams were formed to patrol the playground in the effort to resolve conflicts before they escalated into verbal and/or physical confrontations, and media center materials were purchased to reinforce prosocial behaviors. Analysis of the evaluation data demonstrated that students' interactions with adults and peers improved, although teachers continued to express a need for conflict resolution techniques and strategies to teach and model in the classroom. Also, students utilized the prosocial materials from the media center. As indicated by the results, children proved that they could learn to solve their own problems, and that through peer mediation, they could resolve conflicts in a positive manner, thus avoiding the consequences of anger and violence. (Includes 44 references, the teacher's attitude survey, and peer survey of student's behaviors.) (Author/AA)

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ED 383 412

Improving Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers by Creating a Caring Community: Strategies for Resolving Conflict in the Elementary School

by

Lena Allegro Pryor

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... iii

LIST OF TABLES..... iv

ABSTRACT..... vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION..... 1

Description of Community..... 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role..... 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM..... 5

Problem Description..... 5
Problem Documentation..... 6
Causative Analysis..... 14
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature..... 18

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS..... 28

Goals and Expectations..... 28
Expected Outcomes..... 29
Measurement of Outcomes..... 30

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY..... 34

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions..... 34
Description and Justification for Solution Selected..... 42
Report of Action Taken..... 45

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DISSEMINATION..... 61
Results..... 61
Discussion..... 71
Recommendations..... 73
Dissemination..... 74

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REFERENCES..... 75

Appendices

A TEACHERS' ATTITUDE SURVEY..... 79

B SCHOOL BASED OBJECTIVES..... 81

C PEER SURVEY OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS..... 83

D TEACHER SURVEY OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS. 85

E TEACHERS' AIDES OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTS OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS..... 87

F BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 89

G PERMISSION TO IMPLEMENT..... 92

H NOMINATION BALLOT..... 94

I PERMISSION SLIP..... 96

J CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESS..... 98

K "YOU" MESSAGES, "I" MESSAGES..... 100

L CONFLICT MANAGERS' REPORT..... 102

M CONFLICT MANAGERS' PHOTO..... 104

N CONFLICT MANAGERS' SCHEDULE..... 106

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Results of Teachers' Attitude Survey: Students' Social interactions with Adults and Peers..... 9

2 Office Records of fights in One Week..... 10

3 Results of Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors..... 12

4	Teacher Survey of Students' Behaviors (Classroom).....	13
5	Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Survey-Pre and Post Practicum: Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers.....	63
6	Comparison of the Pre and Post Practicum Teacher Survey of Students' Behaviors (Classroom).....	65
7	Comparison of Pre and Post Practicum Survey of Teachers' Aides' observations and Reports of Students' Behaviors	67
8	Results of Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors	69
9	Comparison of Pre and Post Practicum Office Record of Fights in One Week	70

ABSTRACT

Improving Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers through conflict resolution and peer mediation. Pryor, Lena, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Center for the Advancement of Education. Descriptor: Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation/Conflict/Elementary School Students/Social Interaction/Teaching Strategies/Media Center

Students needed to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Teachers expressed a need for techniques and strategies to help students improve their social interactions.

This practicum was designed to provide students with strategies to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Workshops were presented to teachers in conflict resolution strategies to teach and model in the regular classroom. Peer mediation teams were formed to patrol the playground in the effort to resolve conflicts before they escalated into verbal and/or physical confrontations. Media center materials were purchased to reinforce prosocial behaviors.

Analysis of the data demonstrated that students interactions with adults and peers improved. Teachers continued to express a need for conflict resolution techniques and strategies to teach and model in the classroom. Students utilized prosocial materials from the media center.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer's work setting was in a public school system in a suburban community of a middle Atlantic state. The community was demographically composed of residents who were predominantly white, middle class. There were some minority families, mainly Asian and Latino. The town, within recent memory, was dotted with small family truck farms and homesteads which were intersected by country roads and three state highways. Due to the exodus of the white middle class from the cities, that once rural community took on the trappings of white middle-class suburbia. The bountiful farmland gave way to the pressures inherent in a suburban way of life. Expensive tract homes, town houses, garden apartments and shopping malls replaced once pastoral farmland. Lanes and roads that had been quiet became congested. At the time of the practicum, the town had a population of over 22,000 people. Many of the residents commuted to work in either of the two large cities that

were just beyond the North and Southwestern borders of the state. Some residents were educated as professionals; they maintained their offices in the community. Others were entrepreneurs who operated shops in strip malls and shopping centers that lined the community's highways. Some residents were blue-collar workers. These residents resided in a portion of the community that had developed in the 1800's as a small, quaint seashore town. This section of town contained small bungalows or modest two-story homes snuggled close together on small lots. Many of these modest homes were occupied by descendents of the original families or by young families who could ill-afford homes in the newly developed and highly priced districts of town.

The writer's school district was comprised of four elementary schools, grades 1-6; one intermediate school, grades 7-8; and one high school, grades 9-12. The district employed 270 teachers. All of the teachers were white. Most teachers were female. There were 3319 students in the entire school district. Reflecting the racial make-up of the town, most students were Caucasian, however some were Asian and some were Hispanic. An overwhelming majority of the student body was bussed to school because the township was so large.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's immediate workplace was an elementary school that contained grades that ranged from one through six. The school was over 100 years old. It was the oldest continually operating public school in the district. Largely due to its age, the building had been under threat of closure and as a result, had not been properly maintained for several years. The result of the deferred maintenance was that the school's reputation within the community suffered. The school itself was nestled in an older, predominantly blue-collar section of the larger community. Many of the upwardly mobile residents in the newer sections of the community resisted sending their children to this school. This school, unlike the rest of the schools in the community, retained the neighborhood school concept. An overwhelming majority of the students walked to school. Several students walked home for lunch, a practice that was unheard of in the district's other schools.

The professional staff included 12 full-time teachers and eight itinerant teachers who traveled to other schools within the district. Four teachers were male and 16 were female. There were 237 students enrolled in the school, making this the smallest school

in the district. The students were, for the most part, instructed in 12 self contained classrooms. The average class size was comprised of 22 students. All classes were heterogeneously grouped. A support staff operated the hot lunch program, helped monitor students during the recess period and maintained the plant.

The writer's role was that of administrator of the school. In the role of principal, the writer was responsible for administration of the school so as to promote the educational development and safety of each child.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem in the writer's school was that students needed to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Young school-age children often became involved in petty quarrels that had the potential to escalate into serious conflict. Disputes among students that began with name-calling and other forms of verbal confrontation often ended in physical assault and injury. Bumping into another student unintentionally, or intentionally became the cause of an argument that could result in a scuffle. Children inflicted incredible injury to the spirit of fellow students by shunning, taunting and demeaning each other. In addition, students became increasingly disrespectful of teachers and teacher aides. This disrespect ranged from disregarding instructions to deliberate defiance of authority. This disregard for the rules and regulations of the school left open the potential for students to

bring injury to themselves or to cause others to become injured. Needless to say, the staff was alarmed by their student's lack of regard for the rights and feelings of others.

Briefly stated, the problem was that, students needed to improve their social interaction with adults and peers.

Problem Documentation

There was ample evidence to support the existence of the problem. Teachers in the writer's workplace expressed to this writer their concern about the increase in antisocial behavior among the students. Several staff members had cited a decline in the students' moral values. One teacher confided to this writer that, "Students had an ever increasing desire for self-gratification." This need precluded any concern for the needs of others. Massialas (1990) concurred. He said that there was an ever widening gap between the moral behaviors children were taught and how they actually behave. Other teachers have decried their students' lack of caring and sensitivity for other classmates. One teacher expressed her dismay by saying, "Respect for each other had disappeared". Another stated, "... many slights, insults, and arguments had at their base, a

deficit of social interaction skills". This concern was echoed at the school's staff meetings whenever the discussion of student behavior arose.

The escalating instances of negative behaviors had perplexed the staff. Several teachers in the writer's workplace had indicated that they lacked sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers and that they were receptive to techniques and strategies to improve social interactions among students in their classrooms (see Table 1). A sample of the survey was provided (see Appendix A). Sherer (1992) found that teachers were amenable to training in conflict resolution skills. They agreed that learning these strategies and then teaching them to students was no easy task. O'Neil (1993) felt that it was important for educators to develop constructive means of dealing with conflict. Conflicts were a part of life. Educators needed to develop better ways to handle them so that, in turn, students were taught the skills necessary to deal constructively with the conflicts they faced.

Further evidence of the severity of the problem was that teachers in the writer's workplace consider the problem so pervasive, they selected "improvement of student's social interactions with adults and peers" as one of the two school-based objectives that they

submitted to the county superintendent of schools to be accomplished during the 1993-1994 school year (see Appendix B). Based on the staff's concern as expressed in the above objective, the expressions of concern conveyed to the writer, and on the writer's own observation of numerous antisocial behaviors, the writer selected conflict resolution as the subject of this practicum.

Table 1

Results of Teachers Attitude Survey: Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers

Question	Number of Teachers Responding Y	N	U
1. Do you agree that students need to improve in their social interactions with adults and peers?	11	0	0
2. Do you believe that this need for more positive social interaction has increased in recent years?	11	0	0
3. Do you believe that schools can make a positive impact on improving students' social interactions with adults and peers?	10	0	1
4. Do you believe you have sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers?	4	4	3
5. Would you be receptive to training opportunities that would provide you with techniques and strategies to improve social interactions among students in your classroom?	10	1	0

11 Teachers Responded

Yes = Y No = N U = Unsure

Numerous instances of students' antisocial behavior in their dealing with adults and peers had been brought to the writer's attention for mediation. Table 2 contains a random, one week sample of office reported instances of fighting episodes. However fighting, was only one of a variety of hostile acts perpetrated by young children. There were untold instances of name-calling, taunting, harassment, pushing, tripping, and other hurtful and mean-spirited acts of violence. Much valuable educational time was expended by the writer, as principal, and by the staff in the effort to settle these disputes and to salve the dignity of the injured.

Table 2

Office Record of Fights in One Week

Day	Number of Incidents
1	0
2	2
3	1
4	1
5	1
TOTAL	5

The writer in an attempt to solve the problem had initiated a set of consequences for various

infractions of school rules. This plan had yielded little results. Consequences had only short term value. Children tended to dismiss them and they lost their effect. Dreyfuss (1990) concurred saying that even though students were told that natural consequences followed their actions, school discipline was often selective, partial, ineffective, devoid of dignity and ultimately served to disenfranchise the student.

In a survey of 170 students, (see Appendix C) the results indicated that students sometimes were exposed to name-calling, inappropriate language (sexual references, body parts, etc.) cursing, pushing and hitting inside and outside the writer's school by more aggressive students (see Table 3). Children who had a more protected upbringing were exposed to these negative behaviors and were often at a loss as to how to cope in these situations. This sad state of affairs did not support a climate conducive to the school becoming truly a community of learners. A place where all members had the freedom and peace of mind to fully engage in the learning process without disruption. In order for this to happen, all members of the community must trust and respect each other. They must feel free to take academic risks without the fear of repercussion or ridicule.

Table 3

Results of Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors

Negative Behavior	% of Students Responding		
	N	S	A
1. NAME CALLING	9%	63%	25%
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	28%	61%	09%
3. CURSING	35%	54%	08%
4. LYING	16%	51%	34%
5. STEALING	59%	32%	08%
6. ARGUING	05%	38%	56%
7. PUSHING	06%	53%	39%
8. TRIPPING	41%	45%	14%
9. HITTING	26%	55%	17%
10. FISTFIGHTING	44%	46%	09%
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	34%	42%	22%

170 students surveyed

N == Never S = Sometimes A= Always

A survey of teachers (see Appendix D) found that teachers in the classroom, among other negative behaviors, sometimes observed students using inappropriate language, cursing, lying, hitting and being disrespectful (see Table 4). This behavior was

disruptive to the educational process. Further, it served to diminish pupils' self-esteem and had a negative effect on school spirit.

Table 4

Teacher Survey of Students' Behaviors (Classroom)

Negative Behavior	Number of Teachers Responding		
	N	S	A
1. NAME CALLING	2	6	3
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	1	9	1
3. CURSING	2	9	0
4. LYING	2	8	1
5. STEALING	4	7	0
6. ARGUING	1	5	6
7. PUSHING	1	2	6
8. TRIPPING	3	7	1
9. HITTING	1	9	1
10. FISTFIGHTING	5	5	0
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	1	8	2

11 teachers surveyed

N = Never S = Sometimes A = Always

Causative Analysis

The writer believed there were several causes of the problem. Young people were exposed to pressures that previous generations were spared.

There was a decline in parental supervision in the home during preschool and after school hours due to sociological and economic factors. The rise in the divorce rate coupled with the increase in out-of-wedlock births, contributed in the large rate of single-parent homes. These single parents sustained their families with government assistance or they worked at jobs that often took them from their homes at crucial times of the day when children returned home from school. Finally, because of the economy, many two parent families found it imperative that both adults work. The demands of their jobs left their children without anyone at home when they prepared to come to school and when they returned home. This lack of proper supervision deprived children of the interaction and guidance necessary for problem solving and proper character development. Hechinger (1992) reports that parents of all socioeconomic status were concerned that their children, left unsupervised for long periods of time, were at risk. These children, possibly suffering taunts by other students or peer pressure to engage in harmful

activities, needed guidance and support from caring adults who could direct them in the appropriate ways to circumvent these problems.

Another factor that exacerbated the problem was the proliferation of inadequate positive role models. The rise in the use and abuse of drugs rendered many parents unable to nurture their children and provide them with proper role models for them to emulate.

Because of the expense and the lack of availability of proper childcare facilities, children were often left with inadequately prepared and unregulated daycare providers. These often well-meaning individuals were ill-trained and poorly equipped to provide a stimulating and nurturing environment for their charges. The result was many children were left unsupervised to play violent games or relegated to watch TV, the "electronic babysitter", for hours on end.

The media bore much of the responsibility for the terrible lack of proper role models. Young children were told in popular music and see in movies, videos, video games, and TV that it was acceptable to kill, maim and violate others. In a study conducted 1963 by Bandura, Ross & Ross, the researchers found strong evidence that filmed aggression exacerbated and helped shape the form of aggressive behaviors on the part of

children (Rogers, 1969).

Many highly emulated media idols including rock stars, movie stars and sports figures publicly made inappropriate and suggestive gestures. They lived unhealthy life-styles and publicly boasted of the abuse of drugs and promiscuous sex. Many engaged in activities that disregarded the well-being of others. Children were not being given the proper messages by those bent on profiting at the expense of our vulnerable younger generation.

Finally, the media bombarded students with pervasive acts of violence. Television, movies, video games, and toys, even those directed at children, often depicted gratuitous violence. Cartoon characters, often thought of as harmless, were shown as avengers in stories that depicted excessive aggression. Seemingly benign cartoon animals were shown shooting at each other, falling off cliffs, being blown up by explosives, and/or being run over by steam rollers. These experiences inured our children to brutality, minimized injury, and served to engender hostility. This false sense of acceptable behavior placed our children in danger of becoming the perpetrators or the victims of thoughtless acts of violence, of which, children did not realize the full ramifications.

Authoritarian parenting practices were also the cause of children not developing positive social interactions. Families with caregivers who were high in punishment and offered little warmth often instilled, in children, resentment for authority, low self-worth, and hostility. These children did not learn how to relate to others in a positive fashion. They were often brutalized and in turn, they learned to brutalize those they perceived as weaker than they, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Because of these pressures many of our students had not developed a sense of self-worth. This lack of self-esteem made them susceptible to becoming bullies themselves or on the other hand, becoming victims. Students with low self-esteem often lacked coping skills that enabled them to deal with the myriad of interpersonal problems that arose in the school and neighborhood setting. The writer's school was no exception. More and more of our children were acting out with increased frequency and with increased intensity. Schools choose to deal with these problems on a case by case basis or they opted to try to stem the tide of violence that was intruding on the school-life of our children. The writer chose to address the problem through this practicum.

Educators, legislators, parents and society in general were deeply concerned about the violence that pervaded our nation. Schools, as a microcosm of society, reflected much of society's antisocial behaviors. Schools could and must do all they could to try to solve this problem. However, schools could not accomplish this task alone. It took the effort of all segments of society to try to provide young people with the opportunity to grow and develop physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. This generation of children deserved no less.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A preliminary review of the literature found many references to the problem as described in the writer's worksetting. Their findings concurred with those of the writer, that many students lacked the social skills that enabled them to interact effectively with adults and peers.

The problem was, students needed to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Student/student and student/adult problems were pervasive and were increasing in number. Children found it increasingly difficult to interact with others in a positive manner. Schools, because of the nature of the

institution and the population it served, became the setting for increasingly hostile exchanges between children. Lickona (1993) cited ten troubling trends in American society among them the increase in violence among the young, an increased lack of respect for authority, the rise in instances of lying and stealing, and unwarranted cruelty toward others.

All aspects of life were wrought with conflict. Conflict was a natural component in life. Mankind was in a continuing struggle to compete for things in order to satisfy perceived needs and wants. There was a limit to these materials. As a result, we were preoccupied with creating ways to get what we desire (Jandt, 1985). McClure, Miller & Russo (1992) told us that every society, had within it, elements of conflict. This was because each group had its own agenda. Conflict offered the individual the opportunity to meet challenges and grow in the process. The individual, however must learn to deal with conflicts in a positive manner. Tjosvold & Johnson (1989) stated that in order for individuals and organizations to be effective they must be able to resolve conflict competently. Unfortunately, the children of the "me" generation, a generation obsessed with the gratification of their own needs, found it difficult to set aside their own agenda to meet the

needs of others. The Asbury Park Press in a recent editorial (1994, January, 14) reported that students often arrived at school overwhelmed with social demands engendered by the media and their peers. Children felt impelled to conform to the mores of their peers. When youngsters were unable to cope with these demands, tension was created. This stress interfered with their ability to function in the classroom.

Children in schools were at different levels of physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Young people, because of their differentiated levels of development, were often unable to infer the intent of a verbal exchange and they misinterpret the speakers meaning. Because of this inability to infer proper meaning to words and actions, fights often started. Aggressive students often attributed hostility to the other party. They did not engage in fact-finding and had difficulty in seeing alternatives. They were unable to understand the causes of the problem and unable to resolve the conflict (Steinberg, 1991).

20% of our children lived below the poverty level and experienced the violence of poverty, stated a 1991 report from the Children's Defense Fund (cited in Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992). Economic poverty, if accompanied by poverty of the spirit, deprived children

of proper physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Children, so deprived, had few resources to sustain them when faced with real or perceived conflicts.

Violence in our society extended beyond the classroom and even though schools were not the panacea, teachers did much to teach the social skills necessary to help prevent conflict (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992). It was the obligation of schools to prepare our students to work together so that they could creatively solve problems.

Magid & McKelvey (1987) told us that at-risk children needed much more than just bonding and attachment. At risk-children also needed to learn the prosocial skills of consideration for others, and discerning right from wrong.

Singer & Singer (1981) found that children who watch more violent TV shows showed much more hostility, anger and sadness (cited in Schickedanz, Hansen, & Forsyth, 1990).

A review of the literature provided ample evidence that students needed to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. The Asbury Park Press editorial (1994) said too often schools reflected society. The deviant behaviors present in our

communities were found in our schools. The Press reported that violence, threats, fights, possession and/or use of weapons in New Jersey schools was on the rise.

Lickona (1993), in pressing the case for moral education, cited that from 1968 to 1988 there had been a 53% increase in violent crimes committed by young people. Willis (1993) also found that the rise in youth violence was attributed to their inability to constructively resolve conflicts.

Townley, executive director of the National Association for Mediation in Education, said that conflict alone was not the problem, but that the inability to deal with conflicting wants and needs resulted in violence (cited in Meek, 1992).

The literature suggested several causes of children's need to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. One cause was the destabilization of the family structure. This often left children without one or both parents. The decline in parental supervision during preschool and after-school hours that was due to the rise in single-parent families or in the case of two parent families, where there was an economic need for both parents to work, contributed to a lack of positive behaviors in children. These youngsters often lacked strong moral values and

appropriate role models (Lickona, 1993). Children were not receiving the parental support needed to encourage and help them with their problems and frustrations, stated Seymour & Seymour (1992). Without anyone to talk to at the end of the day, children sought the counsel of peers who were ill-equipped to advise them or they were left to their own devices. Leflore (1988) said children in trouble often come from families where there was little emotional support, a lack of parental expressiveness and little communication (cited in Schickedanz, Hansen & Forsyth, 1990). Working parents were often overwhelmed with the responsibilities of job, home, and family. They were not able to meet the demands that children made on their time and energies. This often led to frustration on the part of both parent and child as needs were left unmet.

Some children came from abusive home situations. Studies showed that abused children often lacked the social skills necessary to deal effectively with conflict. Eron, in a ten year study, found that children who were beaten and abused by parents often become aggressive and hostile while still in childhood (cited in Lickona, 1983). Leflore (1988) (cited in Schickedanz, Hansen, & Forsyth, 1990) and Gordon (1989) concurred with these findings. They held that the cycle

of violence was often passed on from generation to generation. These researchers also held that violence between parents, as witnessed by their children, also led to childhood hostility.

Many children were exposed to real-life violence in their own homes on a regular basis. In a national survey, Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz (1980) found that 1.8 million couples had engaged in domestic violence. When children saw violence in the home first hand, they become desensitized to aggressive actions. Further, this aggression provided a negative model for children's behaviors (cited in Schickedanz, Hansen, & Forsyth, 1990; Gordon, 1989). The lack of positive role-models either in the home or in the media equipped the child with negative paradigms on how to resolve conflict and solve problems (Carlsson-Paige and Levin, 1992).

Children were increasingly exposed to violence through the media. Media depiction of violence had become far more graphic and intensified. Gore sold tickets. As one mother so aptly stated several years ago, "As long as the little kid can reach up to the ticket seller (at a movie theater) and pay his money, they'll sell him a ticket". Unfortunately, the same held true for the sale of video games, and other over

the counter goods specifically designed for the young. While some studies showed that exposure to violence did not directly cause violence in children, it was generally believed that it did contribute to the general level of violence in classrooms and it caused children to become inured to the effects of violence (Kolbert, 1994; Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992).

Schickedanz, Henderson, & Forsyth (1990) and Bandura Ross & Ross (1963) disagreed (cited in Rogers, 1969). They felt that there was a causal and a correlational relationship between filmed models and hostility in young children.

Holt (1970) said that most children in trouble lacked self-esteem. This lack of self-worth led children to act-out against their peers. Aggressiveness masked a basic insecurity and lack of self-esteem. The bully, who picked on other children, operated from a position of moral weakness. These children lacked a feeling of self-worth. This led them to acts of aggression in order to affirm in their own minds as well as in the minds of others their power over others.

The inverse was also true. Children who lacked self-esteem were often perceived as weak and as a result became the scapegoats, the recipients of violent acts.

Children often fought when they were frustrated because they were unable to express their emotions.

They sometimes resorted to hitting and fighting as their only means of resolving conflict (McClure, Miller, & Russo, 1992; Holt, 1970).

Cowan, Palomares & Schilling (1992) cited three styles of response to conflict: aggressive, where the actor was unconcerned about the feelings or rights of others; passive, where the actor, did not stand up for his own rights; and assertive, where the actor stood up for his own rights. Clearly, the child who has been the recipient of aggression would respond in either aggressive or passive modes. Children who were raised without violence or fear would be more confident and assertive.

The writer explored several topical areas. Competition within organizations, including schools, fostered hostility if this conflict was not properly managed (Jandt, 1985; Johnson, 1983; and Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1984). Schools must learn to foster student achievement in a non-competitive way. Schools needed to employ various means to try to ameliorate antisocial behaviors on the part of their students. One method was implementing teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning, that enhanced cooperation and increased student success. Cooperative learning promoted working together and diminished competition at

the expense of the success of others (Slavin, 1987).

Another strategy was to incorporate the social movement that fostered the resurgence of values and moral education in the public schools (Lickona, 1991). American schools had, throughout their long history, taught values. Although in recent history values clarification has come into disuse, Lickona suggested that students be taught common values, values shared by all.

Still another area for educators to use was teaching peace education as a conflict resolution strategy (Bernat, 1993). Peace education that promoted respect for others could be taught as strategy for conflict resolution among individuals and even extended to include global peace.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

Subsequent to analyzing the results of the surveys and after a review of the literature, the writer had several goals.

The following goals and outcomes were developed for this practicum:

1. By the end of this practicum the teachers will be more proficient in teaching and modeling conflict resolution strategies.
2. The students will utilize conflict resolution strategies in order to avoid hostility and violence.
3. The media center will contain age-appropriate books and materials that deal with conflict resolution.
4. Students will check-out and use media center materials that deal with conflict resolution.

Expected Outcomes

At the conclusion of this practicum several outcomes are anticipated. Seven out of 11 regular classroom teachers will indicate that they have sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers. This will be determined by the results of the comparison of a pre practicum and a post practicum measure, entitled Teachers' Attitude Survey, to be completed by regular classroom teachers (see appendix A).

A second anticipated outcome will be fewer instances of students' antisocial behaviors, as measured by the comparison of a pre practicum and a post practicum survey of teachers regarding students' behaviors in a classroom setting entitled Teachers' Survey of Students' Behaviors (see Appendix D). Three teachers will indicate that improvement is shown in six out of 11 antisocial behaviors.

A third anticipated outcome will be that paraprofessionals (teachers' aides) will indicate that there are 25 fewer antisocial behaviors in 5 days of observation. A post survey of paraprofessionals' observations on the playground, entitled Teachers' Aides Observations and Reports of Students' Behaviors (see Appendix E) will be administered at the conclusion of

the practicum.

A fourth anticipated outcome will be that students will indicate that there were 20% fewer instances in each of six out of 11 students' antisocial behaviors, as measured by the comparison of a pre and a post practicum survey of students regarding students' behaviors entitled Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors (see Appendix C).

A fifth expected outcome will be that the writer, as principal, will mediate three less disputes in a five day period as measured by office records.

A sixth outcome will be that the school's media center will acquire 15 items related to conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors. A list of those acquisitions will be included in the report.

A seventh outcome will be that media center records will indicate that students will withdraw five items related to conflict resolution/prosocial behaviors per week. The school's media center records will provide the writer with accurate data.

Measurement of Outcomes

The measurement of outcomes, in this practicum, was accomplished in various manners. In order to measure the success of the goal, teachers will be more

proficient in teaching and modeling conflict resolution strategies, the first outcome, a pre practicum and a post practicum survey, entitled Teachers' Attitude Survey, was to be administered. The written questionnaire asked teachers if they felt they had sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers. It went on to ask teachers their reactions to questions regarding their students' need to improve their social interaction with adults and peers, trends in students' social interactions, the role of the school in effecting change, and their willingness to be trained in strategies to improve social interaction among their students (see Appendix A).

The results of the pre survey and post survey were to be analyzed to determine if teachers, indeed at the end of the practicum, felt more proficient in helping students resolve conflicts. An increase of four "yes" responses, for a total of eight yeses, to question #4 became an indicator of the successful achievement of this goal.

A survey of teachers entitled Teacher Survey of Students' Behaviors was administered as a post practicum query (see Appendix D). The results were to be compared to the pre practicum survey to determine if conflict had

been reduced. An increase of 3 teachers who stated that they saw improvement in six out of eleven negative behaviors in their classrooms was considered goal achievement.

Another measure of students' increased ability to interact positively with others was the Observations and Reports of Student Behaviors checklist completed by paraprofessionals (teachers' aides). At the onset of the practicum and at the conclusion of the practicum a measure was taken and the results were to be compared (see Appendix E). A reduction of 25 instances of negative behaviors in five days was considered goal achievement.

As a means of measuring an increase in positive interactions among students and their peers, a pre and post practicum survey entitled Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors was to be completed by students (see Appendix C). Post practicum data that showed an increase of 20% in each of six, out of eleven, antisocial behaviors was considered increased positive student/student interaction.

To measure fewer disputes, as recorded by the office, a fourth outcome, a pre practicum and post practicum record was to be maintained. An office record of three fewer fights in five days represented goal

achievement.

A fifth outcome, the media center's acquisition of age-appropriate books/materials that dealt with conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors was measured by listing the titles of new library holdings. An increase of 15 items would constitute goal achievement.

Students' use of media center materials that dealt with conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors, a sixth outcome, was to be measured by collecting data on book withdrawals. Media center records that revealed that an average five of these books per week were checked out for the duration of the practicum indicated goal achievement.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Strategies

The problem, as described in the writers school, was students needed to improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Children often lacked the social skills and problem-solving strategies to enable them to relate to others in positive ways. As a result, young school-age children became engaged in petty quarrels that had the potential to escalate into serious conflict. The literature suggested various solutions to the problem.

Lickona (1991) suggested values education was a means of solving the problem. He suggested that the values of courtesy and caring be stressed in schools throughout the daily routine. While stressing common values was an admirable and much needed pursuit, these strategies needed to be augmented with other strategies in order to equip the troubled student with skills to engage in active problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques.

Character education had been suggested by Berreth (1993) as a means of reducing antisocial behaviors, improving grades, and promoting good citizenship. Again good citizenship was also a desired goal. However, students needed to develop, in their repertoire, additional strategies to use in conjunction with good citizenship in order to cope with the problems they faced in the school yard.

Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (1984) told us that cooperative learning was a vehicle to foster basic social skills so that children could work well together. They cited Hartup (1976) and Johnson (1980) when they emphasized that, "peer relationships were a critical element in the development and socialization of children and adolescents" (p 3:4). Studies showed that cooperative learning fostered good will among students, fostered a climate of collaboration, and eliminated competition. Cooperative learning strategies were currently being used in our district. For that reason, cooperative learning strategies did not need to be a part of this practicum.

Etzioni suggested enlisting peer pressure to support prosocial behaviors. He went on to say that without the support of the student body, any attempts to change behaviors were fruitless (Berreth & Scherer,

1993). It went without saying that no program could survive without the support of the student body and the support of the staff.

Drew (1987) and Herman (1991) suggested win-win strategies for conflict resolution. They included: (a) cooling-off, (b) using I-messages, (c) seeing others point of view, (d) each person taking ownership of the problem, (e) brainstorming solutions, (f) affirming each other. McFarland & Culp (1992) also recommended win-win strategies as alternatives to win-lose or lose-lose styles of conflict resolution. Teaching students and staff to implement win-win strategies to solve problems was a proven way to resolve conflicts. This strategy was a valuable tool for all members of the elementary school community to learn.

Class meetings or class circles were also suggested by De Bono (1991) and Drew (1987). Drew offered several steps: (a) sitting in a circle, (b) confining goals to improving school/class climate, (c) each child had a turn to speak, (d) no interrupting, (e) no negativity, (f) everyone listened, (g) seeing others point of view, and finally, (h) publishing the discussion. Drew went on to say, "class meetings provide the opportunity for airing differences, resolving problems, and working

together cooperatively" (p.6). Circle or class meetings were marvelous tools for providing students with a forum to discuss classroom or school yard concerns. It was a viable strategy to use in the elementary school classroom.

Glasser (1993) also suggested circle meetings, but he infused the circles with his "Control Theory". Control Theory was a process by which individuals controlled their lives to best satisfy the needs of survival, love and friendship, power, freedom, and fun. Certainly children needed to learn that they had control over their own actions in their attempts to satisfy their basic needs. Control Theory taught in conjunction with class circles was a very workable strategy for the elementary school classroom.

The N.J. State Violence and Vandalism Task Force made 53 recommendations for improving school safety. Among them they cited developing mentoring and peer mediation programs to help solve problems and more teacher training in conflict resolution (Jackson & Smith, 1994, January 6). Peer mediation was also suggested by Willis (1993) and Roderick (1988). They concluded that trained mediators, rather than solving disputes, helped students to resolve their own conflicts and work out their own solutions to problems.

Once these techniques become second nature they became life-long skills.

Seymour & Seymour (1992) suggested that teachers model positive and responsible behaviors. That they could not expect students to show respect, if they did not demonstrate similar respect to their students. Staff members who used authoritarian styles of management must learn to change to more humanistic methods of dealing with children. Certainly children modeled what they saw. Staff had the unique opportunity to provide students with appropriate models of behavior, behaviors that they were not exposed to in other areas of their lives.

Geddes (1987) recommended a program called "Peace and Justice" which discussed our nation's laws and that each person had rights and responsibilities (Magid & Mckelvey, 1987). While this was a worthwhile program, this strategy could not stand alone in resolving conflict among students. It certainly could however, be an integral part of a more comprehensive program. It could become the social studies component of an overall program of conflict resolution and problem solving.

The fairness approach to conflict resolution had been suggested by Lickona (1983). He offered a three-fold process: achieving mutual understanding, problem

solving, and following through. Again, in 1991, Lickona recommended conflict resolution through a five part approach: (a) planned curriculum, (b) structured skill training, (c) class meetings, (d) intervention in disputes, and (e) problem solution by the disputants. Lickona's plan was a worthwhile and comprehensive program to use in the elementary school. It offered a variety of teaching strategies that provided the students with broad based alternatives to the resolution conflicts.

Gordon (1989) suggested eight alternatives that teachers could use to change inappropriate behaviors. These included using I-messages and problem solving. I-messages were a proven way to defuse volatile situations. Instead of being accusatory the disputants shared their feelings, engaged in active listening, and sought a middle road to problem solution.

The foundation of conflict resolution needed to be built upon the principle of fairness. In what was called the "hidden curriculum", Ryan (1993) proposed that children learn by modeling the fair actions of others. However, children did not learn the true essence of fairness in a didactic way. The concept of fairness needed to permeate the school community in order for children to effectively learn its precepts.

Carlsson-Paige & Levin (1992) offered an approach to conflict resolution that included defining the problem, brainstorming solutions, negotiation skills, and chosing solutions that satisfied both sides. They further suggested the use of class meetings, curriculum activities that stemmed from children's literature and puppetry as the means of infusing the curriculum with conflict resolution strategies within the school environment. Carlsson-Paige and Levin's suggestions were broad-based and offered a variety of strategies applicable across the content areas from literature to the arts, that appealed to elementary school students.

Davis-Peck (1989) reported about an alternative program conducted by the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at a New York school. It included position/needs analysis and formal problem solving.

Another approach was Morton Deutsch's ten essentials of conflict resolution (cited in Davis-Pack, 1989) including; know the type of conflict; respect yourself and your interests, but respect your opponent too; separate positions from interests; explore and identify common interests of both parties; define the problem as mutual; listen attentively and check understanding; be alert to bias on both sides; generate

options for difficult situations; know your typical response pattern; and remain moral. Each of these paradigms would be major components of any plan to introduce conflict resolution in schools. Each strategy approached the problem from a different prospective.

Teaching peace was a proposal by Bernat (1993). She suggested modeling peaceful alternatives to conflict students were taught not to cause hurt in any way, to use words in settling disputes, to determine choices, to foster understanding and they were taught the ability to offer consolation. Peace-making was a natural by-product of conflict resolution. Many schools were implementing peace curricula as a means of conflict resolution and character building.

Steinberg (1991) offered infusing conflict resolution strategies in the existing curriculum and social climate of the classroom. Prosocial values were found imbedded in books and stories children read. Stories in children's literature built values based on how characters demonstrated prosocial behaviors and how they creatively solved their problems. Students learned the values of caring and sharing as they worked with other students using cooperative reading strategies, and through buddy programs that paired older and younger students. Using literature as a vehicle, schools had

the means to imbue the learning environment with peace.

Steinberg's program was particularly attractive to the writer because conflict resolution strategies were not taught in isolation, but instead were found imbedded in the regular curriculum and brought into focus by calling attention to characters and situations in the content areas of the regular curriculum.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The writer recognized it was in the best interest of the children of our school to achieve the school goal as defined by the school staff. The goal was, improvement of students' social interactions with adults and peers. The writer was also cognizant of the need, expressed by teachers, for techniques to teach conflict resolution strategies in the regular classroom. At the same time, the writer was aware of the inordinate demands made on the classroom teacher's time and energies.

Given all of the above factors, the writer stressed the values of courtesy and peace through school-wide promotion of these values. The campaign included the use of motivational assemblies, bulletin boards, and behavior modification strategies. The writer provided staff development opportunities for the teachers in

various problem solving, and conflict management strategies. The writer instituted and supervised a peer-mediation program where win-win strategies were employed. The writer encouraged staff to model positive behaviors at all times. The existing whole language and social studies curriculum were reviewed and infused with activities that cited examples of problem solving and prosocial behaviors as used by characters in the content areas. The writer used drama to demonstrate prosocial behaviors to students through a video production and role-playing. The writer budgeted for and acquired books for the media center that promoted prosocial ideas, problem solving and conflict resolution.

The writer was prepared to try several steps in completing the practicum. The writer: (a) organized a cadre of ten students and trained them in peer mediation strategies so they functioned in peer mediation teams; (b) in-serviced staff in the use of conflict resolution strategies, problem solving, and in the use of class circles; (c) infused the whole language curriculum with activities that maximize the effect of prosocial behaviors found in literature; (d) used whole-school motivational strategies to generate prosocial behaviors; (e) enhanced the media center with books and materials related to conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors;

(f) conducted a weekly summer workshop for students to write, direct and produce a conflict resolution video, for elementary school students; (g) supervised students as they wrote, directed and produced role-plays depicting conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors.

The writer took several steps in completing the practicum. The writer: (a) reviewed the literature and compiled a suitable program to train student in peer mediation strategies; (b) researched the literature for conflict resolution, problem solving, and class circle strategies; (c) requested and received permission to implement the practicum; (d) in-serviced staff in conflict resolution, problem solving, and class circles; (e) trained students as peer mediators; (f) supervised the peer mediation teams and met with the teams weekly to discuss problems and review strategies; (g) infused the whole language program with activities that maximize the students' awareness of characters' prosocial behaviors and/or conflict resolution strategies; (h) used whole-school motivational strategies such as assemblies to promote prosocial behaviors, bulletin boards depicting prosocial behaviors, and behavior modification strategies that fostered and rewarded prosocial behaviors; (i) enhanced the media center's holdings with books and materials

that related to conflict resolution and prosocial behaviors; (j) conducted a weekly summer workshop for students to write, direct and produce a conflict resolution video, for elementary grade students. Students also wrote, directed and produced role-plays; (k) post surveyed students and staff at the end of the practicum to determine if there were any changes in students' behaviors; (l) compiled, analyzed, and presented the data in the final report.

Report of Action Taken

The writer engaged in various activities during the implementation of this practicum.

1. The writer researched the literature on conflict management. Several programs were located that promulgated strategies to promote conflict resolution among young children. The National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME), Amherst, Massachusetts; Educators for Social Responsibility, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and The Community Board Program, San Francisco, California offered comprehensive programs and resources for educators to implement in schools. The writer opted to use several items from The Community Board Program. However, the writer also drew strategies and ideas from various sources (Cowan, Palomares, &

Kreidler, 1984; Prutzman, Stern, Burger & Bodenhamer, 1988).

2. The writer surveyed the teachers to determine their attitudes and their observations of antisocial behaviors in the school setting. The purpose of the surveys was twofold. The first survey served as a needs assessment and the second established a baseline from which the writer could determine the efficacy of the practicum activities. Paraprofessionals and students were also surveyed to determine their own observations of instances of antisocial behaviors among students. This questionnaire served as a baseline from which the writer could evaluate whether improvement had occurred in the playground situation.

3. The writer conducted two teachers' workshops to review conflict resolution strategies and the peer mediation paradigm. In preparation for the professional development experience, the writer researched, developed and compiled a series of handouts that teachers could use in the regular classroom to reinforce self-esteem, affirmation of others, good listening skills, active listening skills, good communication skills, and team building (Cowan, Palomares, & Schilling, 1992; Drew, 1987; Kreidler, 1984; Prutzman, Stern, Burger & Bodenhamer, 1988). These strategies could also be used

to infuse the literature-based reading program with provocative discussions regarding how characters in trade book stories could have handled conflict more effectively.

4. The writer conducted several student body assemblies to support conflict resolution, foster peace, and promote peer mediation. The writer acquired a prosocial video tape for presentation in large assemblies and small group presentations (Elkind, Sweet & Watson, 1992).

5. The writer established, trained, and supported a cadre of peer mediators to patrol the playground during students' recess to help them resolve their own conflicts before they exacerbated into physical confrontations. The writer provided the teams with identifying tee shirts and visors. The writer also provided the peer mediators with a handy notebook that held all materials needed by them to conduct effective mediation sessions on the playground.

6. The writer met with the peer mediation teams (Conflict Managers) weekly to train them, to support their efforts and to build a cohesive group.

7. The writer attended two workshops at the writer's own expense. The writer attended The Community Board Program's workshop in San Francisco, CA and a

second workshop conducted in the writer's own state by facilitators trained at New York University.

8. The writer was instrumental in the acquisition of over 15 new books for the school's media center that reflected prosocial themes (see Appendix F).

9. The writer Surveyed teachers, paraprofessionals and students at the conclusion of the practicum to determine if there was a change of attitudes about the teachers' proficiency in teaching and modeling conflict resolution strategies, in the instances of increased prosocial behaviors on the part of students and in the report to the principal of fights among students.

10. The writer helped select the books and authorized the purchase of pro social materials for the media center.

11. A survey of media center records was conducted by the writer to determine if five pro social books were checked out by students per week.

The writer accomplished these tasks in the following sequence according to a 32 week timeline.

The writer after having researched several peer mediation programs, ordered and received a packet of materials from The Community Board Program of San Francisco. This organization, since its inception in 1976, has mediated community disputes. It has been in

the forefront of organizations that have helped bring peer mediation into the schools. The writer received, Starting a Conflict Manager's Program (The Community Board Program, 1986) and Conflict Manager's Training Manual for Grades 3 - 6 (The Community Board Program, 1985). The writer reviewed the material which contained information regarding how to start up and train peer mediation teams in elementary schools.

The writer met with the superintendent of schools and requested administrative approval for the implementation of the practicum in the writer's school. Permission for the implementation was granted (see Appendix G). The writer addressed the professional staff to explain the purpose of the practicum and to discuss the practicum's direct connection to the declared school goal, namely, to improve students' interaction with adults and peers. The writer's intention was to garner the teachers' support for the implementation of in-class and out-of-class conflict resolution strategies that included peer mediation, problem solving, and class circles. The writer subsequently met with teacher aides to discuss conflict resolution strategies that would be implemented in the lunchroom and on the playground by the Conflict Managers.

The writer enlisted the assistance of the school's social skills committee to construct a monthly bulletin board promoting peace, conflict resolution, or prosocial behaviors. The first bulletin board was designed and executed. The topic of this display was "Playing Fair". It depicted a bear, the school mascot, encouraging others to play fair.

The writer continued to plan for the implementation of the peer mediation teams by organizing the schedule in which the teams patrolled the playground. Additional materials were ordered from The Community Board Program, including an elementary curriculum guide, Conflict Resolution: An Elementary School Program (The Community Board Program, 1990) and video tape, V2-Conflict Managers in Action (The Community Board Program, 1987). The writer's plan was to utilize these items in supporting the peer mediation program. The writer purchased bright yellow tee shirts, black letters and bright yellow sun visors that were later worn by the mediation teams while on patrol. The writer lettered the tee shirts with heat seal letters applied with an electric iron.

The writer organized and conducted two assemblies to promote student interest in conflict resolution strategies and introduce students to peer mediation as a

conflict resolution strategy. One assembly was for grades 1 - 3. The writer explained to the primary students the need for peer mediation teams to circulate on the playground and the advantages of having students help them mediate their own conflicts. The video tape (The Community Board, 1987) of peer mediation teams patrolling and mediating disputes on a playground was shown to the students and teachers. A question and answer period followed. A second assembly was held for the upper grades. Again, the writer explained the advantages of having peer mediation teams in place on our playground to assist in conflict mediation. The writer discussed the desirability of having students mediate their own disputes without the need for adult intervention. The video tape, produced by The Community Board was shown to the upper grade students. The video helped to explicate the program and at the same time helped to generate enthusiasm. A question and answer period followed. The writer announced that the peer mediation teams would consist of fifth and sixth grade students. The students were told that they would be asked to nominate their classmates to serve on the peer mediation teams.

The writer designed a nomination ballot that would enable each student to have three choices in the

selection process (see Appendix H). The writer visited each fifth and sixth grade class and assisted the students in their nominations. The writer compiled the lists of nominees and tallied the votes. The writer listed 15 of the highest vote getters and gave the lists the fifth and sixth grade teachers to enable them to assist the writer in the selection of the eight finalists. Care was taken to choose students who reflected the spectrum of student personalities. The selection included bright students and learning disabled students, well behaved students and children with discipline problems, leaders and followers. Once the selection was complete the peer mediation teams were announced. Each member of the team was given permission slips requesting parental approval for their participation in the program (see Appendix I). The writer prepared a handbook on peer mediation strategies for the peer mediation teams to use during training and while on patrol. The handbook was a looseleaf binder that had a clear sleeve on the front and back cover The steps in the peer mediation process were inserted in the sleeve of the rear cover to enable the Conflict Managers to have the mediation process readily available when they engaged in conflict resolution (see Appendix J). The handbook also contained samples of "you"

statements and "I" statements (see Appendix K) and Conflict Manager report forms (see Appendix L).

Mini-assemblies were held on each grade level to further familiarize the student body with the peer mediation process.

The week-long training of peer mediators (Conflict Managers) was conducted. The Conflict Managers were exposed to a variety of strategies including: the role of the conflict manager; the peer mediation process; good verbal and nonverbal communication; "You" statements and "I" statements; and an effective conflict mediation paradigm.

A general assembly was held to announce to the entire student body the initiation of the peer mediation program and to introduce the peer mediation teams. The teams were warmly received.

The Conflict Managers began to patrol playground in peer mediation teams under the supervision of the writer. They wore their bright yellow tee shirts so they would be highly visible and they carried their handbooks (see Appendix M). They circulated around the playground, in teams, in order to make themselves readily accessible to students, if needed. The weekly Conflict Manager patrol schedule was revised by the writer with the help of the peer mediators. The

schedule was posted throughout the building (see Appendix N). The teams and the writer met once a week, one hour before school began, throughout the practicum implementation, to discuss problems and to review the mediation process. This process served to reinforce skills, increase the Conflict Managers' self-esteem, and build a cohesive team.

Under the supervision of the writer the teams planned to write, direct and produce a show demonstrating peer mediation through the use of live action role-playing. The writer had intended to have the mediators write a puppet show, but the students demurred. The writer respected the decision of the students. The team opted to perform in a series of live role-plays.

The writer met with members of the staff to discuss the media center book selection process. The media specialist, a language arts teacher and the writer reviewed lists of books in order to determine which books would best serve the school's goal of improving students' social interactions and at the same time reinforce the skills of conflict resolution. The social skills committee erected a bulletin board promoting peace. Once again the school mascot, a bear, was used to carry the message.

The writer met with the members of the staff to continue the book selection process. The group perused lists of book titles compiling a preliminary list. The writer met with the peer mediation teams one hour before school began to discuss problems that occurred while on patrol, to review strategies and to build team spirit. Under the supervision of the writer the teams continued to plan a show using role-plays to demonstrate peer mediation.

The writer met with the peer mediation teams, during their regular weekly meetings, to discuss problems and review peer mediation strategies. The Conflict Managers continued to write, direct and produce a show demonstrating peer mediation. The writer and staff members continued the book selection process by reviewing lists and making preliminary selections.

An assembly was held to sustain enthusiasm for the peer mediation program and to review prosocial behaviors. The social skills committee erected a bulletin board promoting prosocial behavior. The theme for that month was building self-esteem. The final selection of media center books was determined by the committee and the selected materials were ordered through the budget process. The teams finalized the role-play. The Conflict Managers presented the role-

play before a large group of primary students.

One student resigned from the peer mediation team. The team member had been pressured by some of his friends to quit. Despite the urging of the writer, the student refused to remain on the team. After consulting with the fifth and sixth grade teachers, a replacement was selected from the original list of nominees. Again, the writer took a risk and selected a child who was not considered a "goody-goody".

The writer continued to meet with peer mediation teams weekly to discuss problems and review strategies. The new team member was trained in the same peer mediation strategies used in the training of the initial team. The new member began to patrol the playground.

The original cadre of mediators were enlarged from eight to 10 students. The purpose was to lighten the patrol schedule so that each team only had to patrol once a week instead of twice a week. The writer trained the new peer mediation team members and utilized this opportunity to review the peer mediation strategies with the current members. A bulletin board promoting a prosocial behavior, sharing, was designed and executed by the social skills committee. Once again, our school mascot was the star.

The writer continued to train the new mediation

members and reviewed peer mediation strategies with current members during the regular weekly meetings. Team members under the supervision of the writer, began to write, direct, and produce a video on the subject of peer mediation. Two videos had been planned by the writer, but the team decided that one video would be sufficient and that it would be very difficult to produce two different tapes. The writer concurred and the decision was made to produce only one video. Each member was given a "homework assignment" to write a script depicting some aspect of conflict resolution.

Several team members brought in scripts, but more effort was needed. Team members, under the supervision of the writer, continued to write and refine scripts for a video about peer mediation. A second team member dropped out of the group, despite the writer's urging that he reconsider. A replacement was selected from the original pool of names generated by the initial selection process. The writer trained the new peer mediation team member and used this opportunity to review peer mediation strategies with current members.

The writer traveled to San Francisco to attend and participate in a week long seminar on implementing conflict mediation in elementary, intermediate, and high schools presented by The Community Board Program. The

week-long training session was an exciting and rewarding experience. Twenty-five educators and other child and youth advocates from all over the United States participated. Under the direction of The Community Board's Managing Trainer and several assistants, the group was given arduous training in all aspects of conflict management and peer mediation in the elementary school, middle school and high school settings. The writer, along with the other trainees, were provided with models of strategies that enhanced self-esteem, problem-solving, conflict management among all age groups. Many role-playing activities were used to encourage the active involvement of the group and to concretize the strategies. The training served to reinforce and affirm much of what had already been accomplished by the practicum experience that was implemented at the writer's school. The writer returned from the San Francisco experience more confident in the process, and very enthusiastic about what the practicum could accomplish and eager to act as a consultant in helping to establish peer mediation teams in other schools, upon request.

The writer shared with the members of the Conflict Manager's team, what was experienced during the seminar in San Francisco. Team members, under the supervision

of the writer, continued to refine their work on the video about peer mediation.

A bulletin board promoting peace was designed and executed. The peer mediation teams completed the video depicting conflict resolution strategies. It was presented to the student body.

The writer suspended the regular weekly meeting in order to attend a 3 day seminar on conflict resolution strategies. The writer anticipated learning a different model. The writer found, instead, that the strategies were quite similar and that the San Francisco seminar was much more comprehensive. Still, the workshop was worthwhile in that it also reinforced the work being carried on by the peer mediators in the writer's school.

A change in the school's lunch routine necessitated a change in the Conflict Manager's schedule for patrolling the playground during recess. The writer met with peer mediation teams to discuss problems with the schedule, get their input in resolving the scheduling dilemma, and review strategies. A bulletin board promoting getting along with others was designed and executed.

An assembly was held to sustain the entire student body's interest and support of peer mediation and conflict resolution. The writer once again reviewed and

clarified, for the student body, the peer mediation process. The writer met with peer mediation teams to discuss problems, review strategies, and foster team building. Post surveys were administered, collected, reviewed and assessed by the writer. The implementation phase was concluded.

CHAPTER V

Results, Discussion, Recommendations and Dissemination

Results

The writer began this practicum because of concerns expressed by the teaching staff during the 1993 -1994 school year. These concerns ultimately became the basis of the school-based objective that cited as a goal, "improvement of students' social interactions with adults and peers". A copy of this goal can be found in Appendix B. The writer's conviction was that students could learn the skills that would enable them to become more peaceful and conciliatory in their dealings with other children and adults. To this end, the writer began this journey.

The writer developed a survey instrument to determine in part if, as a result of the practicum, the teachers were more proficient in strategies to help students improve their social interactions (see Appendix A). The writer anticipated that seven out of 11 faculty members would answer in the affirmative.

The results of the pre practicum and post practicum surveys are presented in a table of the pre practicum tallies, the post practicum results, and the differences in each of the scores (see Table 5).

This goal was not attained. The writer felt that a more comprehensive series of teacher work shops would have provided the instructors with sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers. The writer also believed that teachers were always eager to improve their knowledge and skills in any area. They would be prone to feel that their knowledge was inadequate and they would be receptive to additional training opportunities (see question #5, Table 5).

Table 5

Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Survey - Pre and Post Practicum: Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers

Answer: YES, NO or UNSURE

Question		Number of Teachers Responding Y	N	U
1. Do you agree that students need to improve in their social interactions with adults and peers?	pre	11	0	0
	post	14	0	0
	diff	+04	0	0
2. Do you believe that this need for more positive social interaction has increased in recent years?	pre	11	0	0
	post	13	01	0
	diff	+02	+01	0
3. Do you believe that schools can make a positive impact on improving students' social interactions with adults and peers?	pre	10	0	01
	post	14	0	0
	diff	+04	0	-01
4. Do you believe you have sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers?	pre	04	04	03
	post	05	06	03
	diff	+01	+02	0
5. Would you be receptive to training opportunities that would provide you with techniques and strategies to improve social interactions among students in your classroom?	pre	10	01	0
	post	13	0	0
	diff	+03	-01	0

11 Teachers Responded to the Pre Survey
14 Teachers Responded to the Post Survey

The measurement and analysis of the second anticipated outcome, teachers reported that students had improved their social interactions with adults and peers, was also accomplished by the use of a questionnaire. The writer projected that the teaching staff would indicate that improvement was noted in six out of 11 categories of student antisocial behaviors at the completion of the practicum period. The writer had hoped that the influences of the prosocial in-class activities, the motivational assemblies, videos and implementation of the peer mediation process would result in the diminution of antisocial behaviors in the classroom. The pre practicum behaviors, post practicum behaviors and their comparison, as seen by the teachers, appear in table 6.

Table 6

Comparison of the Pre and Post Practicum Teacher Survey of Students' Behaviors (Classroom)

Negative Behavior	Number of Teachers Responding								
	Pre			Post			Diff		
	N	S	A	N	S	A	N	S	A
1. NAME CALLING	2	6	3	2	12	0	0	+6	-3
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	1	9	1	4	10	0	+3	+1	-1
3. CURSING	2	9	0	7	7	0	+5	-2	0
4. LYING	2	8	1	3	10	1	+1	+2	0
5. STEALING	4	7	0	8	6	0	+4	-1	0
6. ARGUING	1	5	6	2	10	2	+1	+5	-4
7. PUSHING	1	2	6	1	10	3	0	+8	-3
8. TRIPPING	3	7	1	8	5	1	+5	-2	0
9. HITTING	1	9	1	5	8	0	+4	-1	-1
10. FISTFIGHTING	5	5	0	11	3	0	+6	-2	0
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	1	8	2	4	10	0	+3	+2	-2

11 Teachers Responded to the Pre Survey
14 Teachers Responded to the Post Survey

N = Never S = Sometimes A = Always

The second goal was achieved. Nine out of 11 behaviors were deemed improved by the faculty. These results tended to support the writer's idea that the combination of teacher training, student motivation,

peer mediation and support materials would help students improve negative behaviors.

The results of the writer's third goal, which anticipated that paraprofessionals (aides) in the writer's school would determine on an observation form that 25 fewer antisocial behaviors were shown in five days, was achieved. This data was collected on the playground during recess. The pre practicum data, the post practicum information and the differences are presented in table 7. The writer attributed these dramatic results to the effectiveness of the peer mediation teams (Conflict Managers) on the playground. The Conflict Managers were well accepted. The students, on the playground, sought out the help of the peer mediators if they were engaged in a conflict. The Conflict Managers competently carried out the mediation strategies as trained. Because of the effective manner in which they carried out the mediation process, they earned the respect of their peers.

The competence of the teams and the acceptance of the students made the playground a more peaceful place in which to play. This caused the instances of antisocial behaviors to decrease dramatically.

Table 7

Comparison of Pre and Post Practicum Survey of Teachers' Aides' Observations and Reports of Students' Behaviors

BEHAVIOR			TOTAL
	Pre	Post	Diff
1. NAME CALLING	13	10	-03
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	01	05	+04
3. CURSING	01	03	+02
4. LYING	0	0	0
5. STEALING	0	0	0
6. ARGUING	08	09	+01
7. PUSHING	42	28	-14
8. TRIPPING	10	04	-06
9. HITTING	13	07	-06
10. FISTFIGHTING	05	01	-04
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	03	02	-01
TOTAL	96	69	

The fourth anticipated outcome, students will indicate that 20% fewer instances in each of six out of 11 antisocial behaviors, was attained. The figures were computed by calculating the percentage of change in each category "Never, Sometimes or Always". An upgrade in any of these categories indicated fewer instances. The

success of this goal was attributed to the efforts of the teachers in utilizing the in-class conflict resolution strategies, the motivational assemblies, bulletin boards, and the fine work accomplished by the Conflict Managers as they mediated disputes on the playground. The data derived from the pre practicum survey, the post practicum survey and the comparison of each appears in table 8 Results of Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors. The instances of pushing and tripping were still quite high. These behaviors often occurred when the students were on line to enter the building. This indicated to the writer that measures needed to be taken to limit "wait time" on line.

Table 8

Results of Peer Survey of Students' Behaviors

Negative Behavior		Percentage of Students Responding N	S	A
1. NAME CALLING	Pre	09%	63%	25%
	Post	12	63	22
	Diff	+ 3	0	- 3
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	Pre	28%	61%	09%
	Post	35	59	03
	Diff	+07	-02	-06
3. CURSING	Pre	35%	54%	08%
	Post	47	47	04
	Diff	+12	-06	-04
4. LYING	Pre	16%	51%	34%
	Post	33	55	12
	Diff	+17	+04	-22
5. STEALING	Pre	59%	32%	08%
	Post	67	30	01
	Diff	+08	-02	-07
6. ARGUING	Pre	05%	38%	56%
	Post	06	46	43
	Diff	+01	+08	-13
7. PUSHING	Pre	06%	53%	39%
	Post	07	50	40
	Diff	+01	-03	+01
8. TRIPPING	Pre	41%	45%	14%
	Post	50	40	08
	Diff	+09	-05	-06
9. HITTING	Pre	26%	55%	17%
	Post	31	60	04
	Diff	+05	+05	-13
10. FISTFIGHTING	Pre	44%	46%	09%
	Post	47	48	02
	Diff	+03	+02	-07
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	Pre	34%	42%	22%
	Post	37	50	07
	Diff	+03	+08	-15

170 Students Surveyed Pre Practicum, 135 Post Practicum
N = Never S = Sometimes A = Always

A fifth goal, three fewer fights will be mediated in five days was achieved. A review of the records maintained by the principal's office indicated that there were three fewer fights mediated by the principal in one week's time. A comparison of the pre practicum and post practicum data indicated that this outcome was achieved (see Table 9). The lessening of instances of physical fighting could be attributed to the overall stress the staff placed on prosocial behaviors, in conjunction with the influence of the peer mediators who helped manage conflicts before they exacerbated into physical confrontations.

Table 9

Comparison of Pre and Post Practicum Office Record of Fights in One Week

Day	Number of Incidents	
	Pre Practicum	Post Practicum
1	0	1
2	2	0
3	1	0
4	1	0
5	1	0
TOTALS	5	1

The sixth goal, the media center will acquire 15 items related to conflict resolution, was attained. The media center acquired over 15 books related to prosocial themes during the 1993- 1994 school year. The writer and teachers researched the titles by perusing several lists. M. Borba (1992) provided an excellent list of books from which several choices were made. The writer budgeted for them, and authorized the purchases. A bibliography of 15 of the acquisitions appears in Appendix F. These purchases provided support materials to augment the instruction that teachers provided in the classroom. They also provided models of positive behaviors through the media of literature.

The final goal, students will withdraw 5 items related to conflict resolution per week was accomplished. Media center records indicated that at least five books that dealt with prosocial themes were charged out to students in one week's time.

Discussion

The purpose of this 32 week practicum was to improve students' social interaction with adults and peers. Adults in the school community were perplexed by the thoughtless and often cruel ways that students treated

each other. The writer believed that the combination of conflict resolution strategies introduced in the classroom, motivational assemblies, bulletin boards, peer mediation on the playground, and support materials in the media center might effect a positive change in behaviors.

The data derived from this practicum experience lead the writer to believe that indeed negative behaviors could be reduced.

This practicum demonstrated that children could learn to solve their own problems. That through peer mediation, they could resolve conflicts in a positive manner, thus avoiding the devastating consequences of anger and violence.

In conclusion, children proved that they were capable of resolving conflicts in a constructive manner. They could be empowered to solve problems independent of adult intervention and authority.

The implications of this were far reaching. Children did not need to rely solely on the judgements of adults in resolving conflicts. Students could be empowered to solve their own problems. These revelations were liberating for people on all levels. They freed the adults in the school community from having to make "Solomon-like" decisions on a daily

basis, thereby enabling teachers to have more time to teach and the principal to have more time to spend on administrative activities. They freed children to practice and internalize strategies that would enable them to make wise interpersonal decisions in their adult years. Finally, they freed the school community to conduct the business of school: teaching, learning, and experiencing, in a more peaceful and harmonious way absent from fear and stress.

Recommendations

The experiences, the writer incurred during the course of this practicum, intimates several ideas.

1. The writer recommends that the number of teacher work shops on the topic of conflict resolution be increased. Two work shops at the onset of the practicum and 2 at the mid-point are recommended.
2. The writer recommends that teachers be provided with additional strategies as the school year progresses. This process would serve to keep teachers motivated to use the strategies.
3. The writer suggests that 2 teams of peer mediators patrol the playground at recess, in order to make the mediators more accessible if needed.

Dissemination

During a presentation to all the district's administrators, the writer will share the practicum report with the superintendent of schools, assistant superintendents, and building principals. The writer will further disseminate the practicum results by placing a copy of the practicum report in the professional library of each school.

The writer, upon request, will train teachers who wish to serve as peer mediator coordinators in other schools both within the writer's own district and outside the district on a consulting basis.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE SURVEY
STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTERACTION
WITH ADULTS AND PEERS

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE SURVEY

STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH ADULTS AND PEERS

This survey is designed by Lena Pryor as part of a Nova University Practicum experience. Thank you for your consideration. **Please do not sign your name.**

Please circle yes, no or unsure

Question	RESPONSE
1. Do you agree that students need to improve in their social interactions with adults and peers?	Y N U
2. Do you believe that this need for more positive social interaction has increased in recent years?	Y N U
3. Do you believe that schools can make a positive impact on improving students' social interactions with adults and peers?	Y N U
4. Do you believe you have sufficient knowledge of techniques and strategies to improve students' interactions with adults and peers?	Y N U
5. Would you be receptive to training opportunities that would provide you with techniques and strategies to improve social interactions among students in your classroom?	Y N U

If you answered "yes" to question #2, please briefly state why you think this is is happening.

Any other comments:

APPENDIX B
SCHOOL BASED OBJECTIVE

I. Implementation of School-level Plans (N.J.A.C. 6:8-4.4)

School	Principal	Years	Pupil Performance/Behavior Objectives
School	Mrs. Pryor	93-94	Objective #1: By June, 1994, as a result of implementing a daily student/home buddy reading program, 75% of the total population will spend a minimum of 15 minutes daily 80% of the entire school year reading, as measured by tabulating the recorded time on a monthly contract established between the child, parent, and school.
Correlated to District Goal #B			
Correlated to District Goal #A			Objective #2: By June, 1994, as a result of implementing a school wide social skills improvement program developed with student input, 80% of the students in the School will improve in their social interactions with adults and peers by 50%, as measured by comparing the results of an attitude survey administered to all students in October and again in June of the 1993-94 school year.
Correlated to District Goal #B			Objective #3: By April, 1994, as a result of an increased emphasis in identified areas of weakness in mathematics concepts/skills as determined by an item analysis of the performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (1988) administered in the spring of 1993, 75% of the fourth grade students in the School will score above the state minimum level of proficiency as measured by the ITBS administered in April, 1994.

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APPENDIX C
PEER SURVEY
OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

PEER

SURVEY OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

Below are listed some behaviors that you may see in the school or playground (before school, after school, or during recess). Please read the behavior and circle how often you have seen that behavior in school or on the playground in the last five days. Please do not put your name on this paper.

Circle one.

Ex: CUTTING IN LINE.	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. NAME CALLING	Never	Sometimes	Always
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	Never	Sometimes	Always
3. CURSING	Never	Sometimes	Always
4. LYING	Never	Sometimes	Always
5. STEALING	Never	Sometimes	Always
6. ARGUING	Never	Sometimes	Always
7. PUSHING	Never	Sometimes	Always
8. TRIPPING	Never	Sometimes	Always
9. HITTING	Never	Sometimes	Always
10. FISTFIGHTING	Never	Sometimes	Always
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	Never	Sometimes	Always

TOTALS	_____	_____	_____
	Never	Sometimes	Always

APPENDIX D
TEACHER SURVEY
OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

TEACHER

SURVEY OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

Below are listed some behaviors that you may see in the classroom. Please read the behavior and circle how often you have seen that behavior in school in the last five days. Please do not put your name on this paper.

Circle one.

Ex: CUTTING IN LINE.	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. NAME CALLING	Never	Sometimes	Always
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	Never	Sometimes	Always
3. CURSING	Never	Sometimes	Always
4. LYING	Never	Sometimes	Always
5. STEALING	Never	Sometimes	Always
6. ARGUING	Never	Sometimes	Always
7. PUSHING	Never	Sometimes	Always
8. TRIPPING	Never	Sometimes	Always
9. HITTING	Never	Sometimes	Always
10. FISTFIGHTING	Never	Sometimes	Always
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	Never	Sometimes	Always
TOTALS	_____ Never	_____ Sometimes	_____ Always

APPENDIX E
TEACHER' AIDES OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTS OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

TEACHERS' AIDES

OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTS OF STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS

Below are listed some behaviors that you may see in the school or playground during your lunchroom or recess duty. Please place a checkmark next to the behavior each time you observe that behavior or it is reported to you. Do not place your name on this paper.

DATE_____

BEHAVIOR	TOTAL
ex: CUTTING IN LINE	____
1. NAME CALLING	____
2. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	____
3. CURSING	____
4. LYING	____
5. STEALING	____
6. ARGUING	____
7. PUSHING	____
8. TRIPPING	____
9. HITTING	____
10. FISTFIGHTING	____
11. DISRESPECT FOR ADULTS	____
TOTAL	____

APPENDIX F
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

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APPENDIX G
PERMISSION TO IMPLEMENT PRACTICUM

TO: Lena Pryor

FROM: Eileen J. Smith-Stevens

RE: Practicum Proposal

DATE: March 10, 1994

I have reviewed your proposal to initiate actions and strategies to help students improve their social interactions with adults and peers. Your action plan to address conflict resolution is well researched and defined.

Please consider this memo as approval to proceed with the activities as described on page 38 of your proposal. I wish you well and will be interested in the outcome of your study.

APPENDIX H
CONFLICT MANAGER
NOMINATION BALLOT

CONFLICT MANAGER NOMINATION BALLOT

PLEASE LIST BELOW THE NAMES OF THREE CLASSMATES YOU FEEL WOULD BE GOOD CANDIDATES FOR THE CONFLICT MANAGER TEAMS.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX I
PERMISSION SLIP

CONFLICT MANAGER PERMISSION SLIP

Dear Parents,

Your child has been nominated to participate in the _____ school's Conflict Managers Program. Your child will be trained to help mediate disputes among his/her fellow students.

Conflict Managers never mediate physical confrontations. They mediate disputes before physical conflicts erupt. Please sign the permission slip below if you would like your child to participate.

My child _____ has my permission to participate in the School Conflict Manager Program.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

APPENDIX J
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a Conflict Manager.

I am here to help you solve your own problem.

_____ Get students to agree to:

1. not interrupt

2. no name calling or put downs

_____ Ask person #1 what happened and how they feel about the problem.

_____ Ask person # 2 what happened and how they feel about the problem.

_____ Ask person #1 what she/he can do to resolve their part of the problem.

_____ Ask person #2 what she/he can do to resolve their part of the problem.

_____ Ask them if the solution is a good one. If they agree, the problem is solved. If they do not agree ask the students to brainstorm new solutions.

_____ Congratulate the students for their efforts to solve their problem.

_____ Fill out the Conflict Manager Report Form.

APPENDIX K
"YOU" MESSAGES
"I" MESSAGES

USING "I" MESSAGES

OBJECTIVES

0 Students will learn to use "I" messages

0 Students determine how they effect conflicts

MATERIALS

0 Chart prepared as follows:

"You" Messages

You're mean

You're stupid

You're careless

"I" Messages

I feel angry,

when you_____,

because_____

Procedure

1. "We are going to talk about "You" messages and "I" messages. "You" messages place blame and makes the other person feel badly.
2. When you start with the word "I", blame is not placed on anyone. "I" messages show how you feel.
3. Model "YOU" messages. Discuss how they make people feel badly.
4. Model "I" messages. Discuss how telling about your feelings does not hurt the other person.
5. Role-play some imaginary conflicts and practice using "You" messages. How did they effect the conflict? Practice "I" messages. How did they effect the conflict?

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APPENDIX L
CONFLICT MANAGERS' REPORT FORM

conflict manager's report

conflict managers_____Date_____

_____

Who had the conflict? _____

_____

_____

_____

What kind of conflict? argument ?

_____ argument

_____ Name Calling

Other____

Explain the conflict_____

_____

_____

Student 1 agrees to _____

_____

Student 2 agrees to_____

APPENDIX M
CONFLICT MANAGERS' PHOTO

105

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APPENDIX N
CONFLICT MANAGERS' SCHEDULE

CONFLICT MANAGER'S SCHEDULE

12:30 - 12:45 BOTH MANAGERS EAT LUNCH

12:45 - 1:05 PATROL PLAYGROUND WITH 3RD & 4TH GRADERS

1:10 - 1: 30 PATROL PLAYGROUND WITH 4TH & 5TH GRADERS

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
MATT	TRICIA	KIM
KAITLIN	LAUREN	ARMANDO

THURSDAY	FRIDAY
JESSICA	JOE
DAYNA	LEIGH-ANN